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Pirnar, Ige and Kurtural, Sinem

Yasar University, Guzel Izmir Hotel

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ALTERNATIVE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: CASE OF URLA

Ige Pirnar

Yasar University, Faculty of Business, Turkey
ige.pirnar@yasar.edu.tr

Sinem Kurtural

Guzel Izmir Hotel, Turkey
snmkurtural@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The first part of the study gives a brief information on Urla district in Izmir, Turkey and briefly emphasizes alternative tourism benefits and various types of it. The second section focuses on a case study on Urla district and the alternative tourism applications of the destination namely; festival tourism, heritage tourism, new-culture tourism, camping tourism, trekking tourism, yacht and sailing tourism, wine tourism, gastronomy tourism, adventure tourism and eco- tourism. A derived SWOT analysis on Urla's alternative tourism is also included in the final part where appropriate strategies and suggestions which are likely to optimize the strengths and opportunities, to eliminate or strengthen the weaknesses and to handle the threats are developed.

Key Words: Alternative forms of tourism, Urla, SWOT Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Despite the rapid increase of global mass tourism development, alternative tourism has a slow growth pattern and includes various tourism types like gastronomy tourism, slow tourism, agri-tourism, museum tourism, shopping tourism, dark tourism, eco-tourism, medical tourism, MICE tourism, sports tourism, yacht tourism and such (Valachis et al., 2009; Erdogan and Kuter, 2017). There are many types of alternative forms of tourism, but the common characteristic of each type is that it segments a very homogeneous target group demanding the similar things in their tour packages or travel experiences. There are many benefits that alternative tourism applications bring to a destination. Main ones are the revenue generation where the alternative tourists are willing to spend for their unique travel experiences. Another is the improvement in local employment and quality of life levels of residents. They also support specific know-how and expert practice in travel agencies, accommodation facilities and related business operations. Alternative tourism applications have the advantages of niche marketing also, since the satisfied tourists become loyal customers who have positive thoughts about the destination and impact word of mouth advertising.

Urla has a huge potential for many sorts and subsectors of tourism which has a high potential for development. The region has a great demand for mass tourism and 3 S, though the potential for alternative tourism types seems to be even more but not optimized at all. Thus, the region seems to lag behind the general tourism development pattern of Turkey. This study highlights the potential of alternative tourism types of Urla district which was brought as a solution to the disadvantages global mass /3S tourism development brings. Therefore, the aim of this original study is to make a preliminary SWOT analysis of alternative tourism potential of Urla district which has many different alternative tourism types as a potential for development and choose the most promising ones.

URLA DISTRICT AND ALTERNATIVE TOURISM

Urla is a town located 35. km from Izmir, the 3rd biggest city of Turkey and 45 km away from Cesme, a famous tourism destination (Unsal& Kurucu, 2016; Zogal & Emekli 2018). Urla has a population of 49.000 and is located in the same name Urla peninsula. It is a very modern town where most of the residents consist of wealthy and well-educated people.

Urla district has a huge potential for many sorts of tourism. The mild suitable climate, rich ancient history, touristic investments and natural ecological beauty of the area makes the district an important source for tourism industry (Iriguer& Ozdoğan, 2017). The potential of the district is suitable to extend the touristic season and to increase the kinds of tourism products offered. Urla is famous with its cuisine and becoming quite popular for gastronomy tourists (Kargiglioğlu & Kabacik, 2017). In addition, the town hosts many gastronomical festivals like International Urla Artichoke Festival (Bakirci et al, 2017), Barbaros Oyuk Festival (Farm Scarecrow Festival), Traditional Herb Festival, International Village Theatres Festival, Nohutalan Cantaloupe Festival, Sardine Festival and the Literature Festival. In addition, Urla hosts a traditional 2600-year-old Harvest Festival which has been organized cooperatively by the Chamber of Agriculture and the Municipality of Urla for 20 years now. Agriculture and organic farming are also important development areas of Urla district (Turkmen, 2016). "Urla has a rich agricultural hinterland and organic farming that Urla is selected as one of the pilot areas in Izmir Metropolitan Area under Agriculture and Rural Development Financial Support Programme 2010" (Karakayaci & Ozcan, 2011:31)

Urla's rural touristic assets are very rich in variety and they are dispersed as normal villages, coastal seaside villages and forest villages (Emekli & Soykan, 2008). Altogether, there are 14 villages of Urla and some of these villages are very unique like the 1000 years old Özbek village with interesting heritage and natural resources. Bademler village, owns Turkey's first and only village theatre (Ersoy, 2017). In addition, Urla was the first olive oil production center of Anatolia and has heritage sites as Klazomenai antique city and Limantepe (Karakayaci & Ozcan, 2011:). World's biggest olive oil history museum (Kostem) is located in Urla and projects like Ankara University Mustafa V. Koç Marine Archeology Application and Research Center (ANKÜSAM) and Liman Tepe Underwater Excavations make the district very appealing for heritage and culture tourists.

Urla has a nice marina and the sea around the Urla marina is clean, the wind and the coastline is suitable for sea sports and yachting. With the help of Urla Yacht Club (URİYAT) district hosts many sea sports, sailing races and competition events periodically.

When assets of Urla district is studied, it is understood that; festival tourism, gastronomy tourism, yacht tourism, sports tourism, culture tourism, education tourism, thermal tourism, religious tourism, agri-tourism eco-tourism, wine tourism, trekking and similar eco-friendly tourism types are becoming popular and have a high potential alternative tourism types for it (Ivonavo, 2012; Zagrali & Akbaba, 2015; Kose

2017; Iriguer & Ozdoğan, 2017). Thus, the potential of the district to attract specialized interest groups and nature friendly affluent tourists by innovative alternative tourism products is high.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, both primary research data and secondary research data (Christou, 2006; Icoz, Pinar & Gunlu, 2010; Pinar & Icoz, 2010; Pinar, 2011; Velibeyoglu, 2016; Iriguer & Ozdoğan, 2017; Zogal& Emekli2018) is used to gather information presented in table 1 below showing the SWOT analysis of alternative tourism potential of Urla district in Turkey.

Qualitative research is preferred for primary data collection. Interviews were held face-to-face where the semi-structured open-ended questions shown in appendix 1 with the 20 experts consisting the sample. The respondents are experts and residents of both Urla district and its' alternative tourism potential.

SWOT Analysis of Alternative Tourism Potential of Urla District

A SWOT analysis is a method including the detailed investigation of the present situation of a company, firm, product, service, district etc. where strengths and weaknesses related to the analyzed subject and opportunities and threats that are related to the surrounding economic, politic, social and cultural environments are analyzed. The opportunities and threats should be related to the areas that have effect on the subject's activities and success. (Christou & Kassianidis, 2002; Tribe, 2010; Sariisik, Turkay, & Akova, 2011).

The data gathered from qualitative interview method were analyzed and a SWOT analysis table (table 1 below) was derived from replies of the interview. The derived SWOT analysis table of Urla district's potential for alternative tourism types involves a detailed examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the district, and the opportunities and threats happening within its' external environments. Related to SWOT S/O, W/O, S/T and W/T strategies gathered from the interview replies were also concluded as adjunct to the SWOT analysis table

Table 1- SWOT Analysis of Alternative Tourism Potential of Urla District in Turkey

	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing popularity of Urla 2. Climate is suitable for season extension 3. Potential for alternative tourism types like festival tourism, gastronomy tourism, yacht tourism, slow food tourism, rural tourism, culture tourism, wine tourism education tourism, thermal tourism, religious tourism, agri-tourism, sports tourism, eco-tourism, wine tourism, trekking and heritage 4. Hosts many different festivals 5. Coastal shores are long 6. Owns quite a number of unique heritage sites like Klazomenai Antique city 7. Existence of Izmir Institute of Technology with a techno park. Techno parks serve as tools for the creation of advanced technology and competitiveness 8. Urla marina and organization of many yacht sailing races 9. District is very near to important tourism destinations 10. Existence of many wineries. 11. Projects like Ankara University Mustafa V. Koç Marine Archeology Application and Research Center (ANKÜSAM) and Liman Tepe Underwater Excavations 12. World's biggest olive oil history museum (Kostem) 13. Existence of interesting boutique hotels and recreational areas 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resource allocation conflict between improvement / development & protection issues 2. Population growth and increasing immigration 3. Inconsistent marketing messages and lack of cooperation for promotional efforts of Urla's tourism 4. Need for special interest tourism employee training 5. Insufficient number of qualified tourism staff 6. Need for more specialized travel agencies for alternative tourism types 7. As a transportation mode sea is almost not utilized in Urla 8. The restoration efforts of historical and cultural buildings is insufficient. 9. Not utilizing modern management techniques like quality management, strategic planning, benchmarking and innovation 10. Need for an integrated approach for regional alternative tourism developments

	14. Innovative products like the art street, bicycle route 15. Urla-Cesme-Karaburun Peninsula Sustainable Development Strategy 2014–2023’, as a subsequent part of Izmir Regional Plan produced by Izmir Regional Development Agency	
Opportunities (O) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growing interest in alternative tourism types in global market 2. Increase in new special interest markets like festivals and gastronomy 3. Changes in psychographics of the consumer groups, 4. Changes in consumer needs and changing trends towards sustainability, ecology and such 5. Increase interest in sustainability issues 	S/O Strategies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a unique Urla brand focusing on sustainability image and it’s alternative tourism potential 2. Promote to specific target segments like culture tourists, gastronomy tourists, culture tourists etc. 3. Use cultural and natural beauties to create a differential image of Urla 4. By focusing on unique projects, resources and strengths of Urla, promote the brand accordingly 5. Emphasize the sustainability, quality and price differentiation in promotion 	W/O Strategies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use innovative marketing 2. Try to overcome the pollution problems 3. Reduce red tape and ease the formal procedures for projects supporting environmental protection and development in alternative tourism. 4. Focus on niche markets for special interest groups 5. For cost minimization and productivity, go for strategic partnerships and alliances 6. Establish standard quality by investment and enterprise certifying and documentation 7. Apply and sustainable management systems including / emphasizing ecological ones
Threats (T) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Severe global competition 2. Economic problems 3. Decline in the number of species, endangered species, habitat loss 4. Regional competition 5. Increasing water pollution, air pollution and soil pollution 6. Huge increase in land and housing prices. 	S/T Strategies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use innovative management and cost reduction strategies 2. Offer different package alternatives for special interest tourists. 3. Offer innovative and tailor-made special interest tour packages 4. Stress the price-value proposition in promotions 5. Applying a promotional mix of Urla directed to target niche customers through green channels emphasizing sustainability 	W/T Strategies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use modern marketing and branding tools for lasting image of Urla brand 2. Use a consistent promotional message focusing on a good deal for quality- value proposition 3. Use all the combinations of suitable 8 P’s marketing mix 4. Apply a coordinated regional policy for alternative tourism development in Urla 5. For synergy establish regional cooperation and destination marketing platform for Urla

FINDINGS & CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that alternative tourism types like; festival tourism, gastronomy tourism, yacht tourism, sports tourism, culture tourism, wine tourism education tourism, thermal

tourism, religious tourism, agri-tourism, sports tourism, eco-tourism, wine tourism, trekking and heritage and slow tourism are indeed very suitable alternative tourism types for Urla district where there seems to have huge growth potential. Thus, the survey and SWOT analysis results indicate that the stated suggestions and areas of importance are vital points for development in Urla's alternative tourism applications.

- Application of festival tourism, gastronomy tourism, organic farming, yacht tourism, sports tourism, culture tourism, wine tourism education tourism, thermal tourism, religious tourism, agri-tourism, sports tourism (cycling, trekking, and such ecological sports), eco-tourism, wine tourism, heritage and slow tourism / slow food as applicable and suitable alternative tourism types
- Encouragement of sustainable tourism development
- Certification of the human resources for sustainable applications
- Supporting the technological improvements & superstructure development in alternative tourism projects.
- Focusing on niche markets for special interest groups like gastronomy tourists
- Providing opportunity for cost minimization and productivity, look for strategic partnerships and alliances and merger options
- Establishing standard quality by investing in enterprise certifying and standard documentation
- Applying quality and sustainable management systems including / emphasizing ecological ones
- Focusing on green marketing and sustainable / renewable energy sources
- Using a consistent promotional message focusing on a good deal for quality- value proposition
- Focusing mainly on festival marketing, gastronomy tourism, rural tourism, organic farming and heritage & culture tourism
- Applying suitable 8 P's (place, promotion, product, price, people, process, physical evidence and productivity) marketing mix for Urla as a marketing strategy focusing on sustainability
- Applying a promotional mix directed to target niche customers through green channels emphasizing sustainability
- Improving organic food farming and sustainable restaurants in the district.
- Identifying barriers, encouraging usage of permits and legislation for the alternative tourism growth
- Involving local community in sustainability and increasing local participation with the help of training
- Forming Urla district's tourism destination platform for solid results in regional improvement in alternative tourism applications
- Conducting periodical alternative tourism inventory of Urla district and determining problem areas for improvement
- Working on zoning plans and reinforcing clustering subcategories of various tourism types (zoning through development of alternative tourism types within clusters)
- Finding and allocating the necessary funds for Kızılirmak antique city and Limantepe Excavations since 80% of the work is not completed yet.
- Conducting the new marina projects
- Urla's museum project should be completed.

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

This research as many others do has some limitations. First limitation is the constraint of timing. Also the limited sample size is another one, where the number of the respondents were 20 for primary data gathering. For further research it is suggested to conduct not only qualitative, but also a related quantitative analysis with a greater sample size for the study. Also, other marketing and management analysis types like PESTEL etc, maybe added to the conducted SWOT analysis of the study.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions

1. Do you think Urla district maybe regarded as a suitable destination for alternative tourism types like thermal and health tourism, yacht tourism, sports tourism, culture tourism, religious tourism, agri-tourism, gastronomy tourism, eco-tourism, wine tourism and festival tourism? If you agree, please indicate the most suitable 3 that has a potential for improvement?
2. Do you think the for alternative tourism potential of Urla district is utilized in full for alternative tourism purposes? If no, why do you think the reason is?
3. State the;
 - a. strong points (strengths) of Urla district's alternative tourism
 - b. weak points (weaknesses) of Urla district's alternative tourism
4. In order to promote and improve the alternative tourism types and associated markets in Urla district name the related;
 - a. opportunities
 - b. threats
 taking into consideration the impacts that may come from all the economic, politic, social, legislative, cultural and technological external environments.
5. a According to you, what should be the S/O and W/O strategies applicable for Urla district's alternative tourism development and improvement?
5. b. According to you, what should be the S/T and W/T strategies applicable for Urla district's alternative tourism development and improvement?
6. Which one of the alternative tourism types stated below are suitable for Urla district's tourism promotion when its' natural and cultural resources and district characteristics are taken into consideration (Please mark and number the most suitable 5)
 - ☐ Slow food trend
 - ☐ Gastronomy tourism
 - ☐ Festival tourism (Artichoke Festival, Barbaros Oyuk Festival (Farm Scarecrow Festival), Traditional Herb Festival, International Village Theatres Festival, Nohutalan Cantaloupe Festival, etc) _____ (you may state your suggestions)
 - ☐ Camping
 - ☐ Sailing & yachting
 - ☐ Sports _____ (you may state the kind of the sports)
 - ☐ Rural tourism
 - ☐ Agri-tourism
 - ☐ Organic & sustainable agriculture
 - ☐ Organic farming
 - ☐ 3rd age group (special tours for people aged 65 and over years)
 - ☐ Historical and cultural heritage

- Eco-tourism
- Education aimed tourism
- Birdwatching
- Youth tourism
- Adventure tourism
- Visits to wine production places and wineries
- Popular culture tourism (concerts, fairs etc.)
- Religious tourism
- Caravanning
- Trekking
- Other (please state) _____